

**U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
SPOTLIGHT SPECIES ACTION PLAN**

Common Name: Utah prairie dog
Scientific Name: *Cynomys parvidens*
Lead Region: Mountain-Prairie Region (Region 6), Denver, Colorado
Lead Field Office: Utah Ecological Services Field Office
2369 West Orton Circle, Suite 50
West Valley City, Utah 84119
801-975-3330

Species Information:

Status: Threatened
Recovery Priority Number: 8C
Recovery Plan: 1991 Utah Prairie Dog Recovery Plan (a revision of this plan is underway)
5-year Review: Initiated February 21, 2007, and remains underway
Other: 2007; 90-Day Finding on a Petition to Reclassify the Utah Prairie Dog From Threatened to Endangered and Initiation of a 5-Year Review, 1997; Utah Prairie Dog Interim Conservation Strategy 1991; Final Rule to Amend Special Rule Allowing Regulated Taking of Utah Prairie Dog, 1984; Final Rule to Reclassify Utah Prairie Dog as Threatened w/ Special Rule to Allow Regulated Taking

Threats: Recent Utah prairie dog population trends appear to be relatively stable, although the species remains vulnerable to several serious threats. Threats across the range of the Utah prairie dog include a preference for habitats that are also favored for human activities such as agriculture and recreation, urban development, pervasive disease issues (i.e., plague), and changing habitat conditions as a consequence of regional climate change and land use activities. Strategically, these issues can be reduced to two overriding concerns: loss of habitat and plague.

Target: The 5-year goal is to improve the status of the Utah prairie dog. This action plan for the Utah prairie dog is predicated on the need to address the loss and fragmentation of prairie dog habitat and the continued threat of disease through a program that encompasses threats abatement, population management, research, and monitoring.

Measure:

- Utah prairie dog population numbers and spatial distribution is increased
- The threat of plague is reduced.
- Public outreach on the values of the Utah prairie dog is improved.

Actions:

5-Year Priority Actions:

- **Conserve habitat on non-federal lands.**
Threats / Listing Factors Addressed: All threats and listing factors are addressed.

Estimated Costs: \$1,000,000 total for work over the next 5 years. Costs are based on an average cost per acre for land acquisition and easements of \$10,000 but that could vary with market fluctuations. The effort includes the acquisition of 50 acres per year in conservation easements or land acquisitions for a total of 250 acres over the next 5 years.

Responsible Parties: Natural Resources Conservation Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Utah Department of Natural Resources, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Farm Bureau, Resource Conservation and Development Council, Environmental Defense, Counties

- **Implement translocations in accordance with the Recommended Translocation Procedures to increase the number of Utah prairie dog colonies throughout the range.**

Threats / Listing Factors Addressed: Urban Expansion / Factor A

Estimated Costs: \$400,000 total for work over the next 5 years

Responsible Parties: Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service

- **Develop and implement research priorities to improve translocation efforts.**

Threats / Listing Factors Addressed: Urban Expansion, Genetic Diversity / Factor A, E

Estimated Costs: \$40,000 total for work over the next 5 years. This will be coupled with other available funds and grants, including the Endangered Species Mitigation Fund administered by the Utah Department of Natural Resources.

Responsible Parties: Utah Prairie Dog Recovery Team, Utah Department of Natural Resources

- **Continue research efforts on systemic flea control bait and plague vaccine for Utah prairie dogs.**

Threats / Listing Factors Addressed: Disease / Factor C

Estimated Costs: Cost estimates are unknown at this time.

Responsible Parties: Fish and Wildlife Service, University of Missouri, United States Geological Survey, Utah Prairie Dog Recovery Team

- **Develop and implement public outreach efforts.** The program will include publishing and distributing habitat management guidelines for private lands and promoting the Utah Prairie Dog Habitat Credit and Exchange program and the Safe Harbor program to private landowners.

Threats / Listing Factors Addressed: Urban Expansion, Agriculture, Poaching / Factor A, B

Estimated Costs: \$500,000 total for work over the next 5 years

Responsible Parties: Environmental Defense, Farm Bureau, Resource Conservation and Development Council, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Southern Utah University

On-Going Actions:

- **Utah prairie dog surveys and annual population monitoring**

Threats / Listing Factors Addressed: All threats and listing factors are addressed

Estimated Costs: \$150,000 total for work over the next 5 years

Responsible Parties: Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources

- **Prioritize Utah prairie dog habitat for protection.**

Threats / Listing Factors Addressed: All threats and listing factors are addressed

Estimated Costs: \$60,000 total for work over the next 5 years

Responsible Parties: Utah Prairie Dog Recovery Team

Role of other agencies: The Utah Prairie Dog Recovery Team is comprised of members from Fish and Wildlife Service, Utah Division of Wildlife Resources, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, National Park Service, Utah State University, Farm Bureau, and Environmental Defense. The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources performs annual survey and population monitoring for the species. The Bureau of Land Management, Forest Service, and National Park Service implement habitat improvement projects and ensure that activities incorporate conservation measures for the species. The Natural Resources Conservation Service, Environmental Defense, Farm Bureau, and Utah State University assist with conservation activities with private landowners and public outreach.

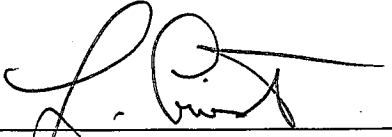
Role of other ESA programs: Section 7 consultations and Habitat Conservation Plans (HCPs) incorporate conservation measures to minimize and compensate for loss of occupied habitat. There are currently 2 larger HCPs, 5 individual Safe Harbor Agreements (SHAs), and one programmatic SHA for the species. SHAs are a critical aspect of improving the species' status because 70% of Utah prairie dog habitat is found on private lands. Section 6 grants can assist in funding priority actions for the Utah prairie dog.

Role of other FWS programs: The Partners program has assisted with the Safe Harbor work. Law Enforcement Officers investigate illegal activities and take action if necessary. Recovery land acquisition and HCP land acquisition has been funded via Federal Aid Section 6 grants.

Additional funding analysis: Approximately 70% of Utah prairie dog habitat occurs on private lands; therefore recovery of the species is dependent on conserving habitat on non-federal lands. This effort will involve partnerships with private grant organizations and environmental groups. Additional funds will be needed to expand market-based and other financial incentives for private landowners, as well as to establish an endowment fund to administer and manage protected property. Sufficient habitat protection should improve Utah prairie dog status and bring the species closer to recovery. Habitat conservation cost estimate at \$10,000,000 total for work over the next 5 years.

Improving habitat on federal lands and continuing to enhance the translocation program are also important activities. The Utah Prairie Dog Recovery Team will continue to select and prioritize translocation sites across the range of Utah prairie dogs and research translocation techniques. Additional funding would further assist in working on these priorities. Translocation site selection and prioritization cost estimate at \$250,000 total for work over the next 5 years.

Continued funding is needed to advance plague research priorities (\$40,000 total for work over the next 5 years), a plague prevention and response plan (\$750,000 total for work over the next 5 years), and a monitoring strategy and database for plague (\$250,000 total for work over the next 5 years).



Project Leader

9/23/09

Date